Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region One
490 North Meridian Rd.
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 752-5501
FAX: 406-257-0349
Ref:DV240-00
September 18, 2000

TO: Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Helena, 59620-1704
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Bldg., PO Box 200901, Helena, 59620-0901
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Director's Office – Rich Clough
Fisheries Division – Dorothy Lindsay
Parks Division – Jeff Erickson
Legal Unit
Montana Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, 225 North Roberts, Veteran's Memorial Building, Helena, 59620-1201
Montana State Library, 1515 East Sixth Ave., Helena, 59620-1800
Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, PO Box 1184, Helena, 59624
George Ochenski, PO Box 689, Helena, 59624
Wayne Hirst, Montana State Parks Foundation, PO Box 728, Libby, 59923
Montana State Parks Association, PO Box 699, Billings, 59103
Joe Gutkoski, President, Montana River Action Network, 304 N 18th Ave., Bozeman, 59773-8298
Rep. Bob Lawson, Box 686, Whitefish, 59937-0686
Sen. Bob DePratu, PO Box 1217, Whitefish, 59937-1217
Rep. Aubyn Curtiss, PO Box 216, Fortine, 59918-0216
Sen. William Crismore, 237 Airfield Rd. S, Libby, 59923
Rep. Rob Raney, 212 S. 6th, Livingston, 59047
Jane Kollmeyer, USFS, Tally Lake Ranger District,1335 Hwy 93 W, Whitefish, 59937
Flathead County Library, 247 First Avenue E, Kalispell, 59901
Flathead County Library, 9 Spokane Ave., Whitefish, 59937
Flathead County Commissioners, 800 S. Main, Kalispell, 59901
Flathead Wildlife, PO Box 4, Kalispell, 59903
Glen Anacker, FVTU, PO Box 638, Kalispell, 59903
Beth Gardener, USFS Tally Lake Ranger District, 1335 Hwy 93 W, Whitefish, 59937

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the Robertson Creek Experimental Cutthroat Trout Population project. The project proposes to move no more than 100 westslope cutthroat trout from Good Creek to Robertson Creek, above the natural barrier near FS Road 60. This will serve to establish a genetically pure population of westslope cutthroat trout that will be safeguarded from invasion by brook and rainbow due to the natural barrier near FS Road 60.

Questions and comments will be accepted through Monday, October 2, 2000. Please direct your questions or comments to Grant Grisak, Fisheries Biologist, FWP, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dan Vincent
Regional Supervisor

DV/nli

Flathead 2e

DRAFT

MEPA/NEPA/HB495 GENERIC CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of Proposed State Action: Stocking of a fishless stream with an experimental population of genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout.

2. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action: MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks

3. Name of Project: Robertson Creek Experimental Cutthroat Trout Population

4. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)

5. If Applicable:

   Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: October 1, 2000
   Estimated Completion Date: November 30, 2000
   Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 60%

6. Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township):

   Flathead County, T32N, R25W, S6 & S31 and T31N, R25W, S7

7. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

   (a) Developed:
   residential.....0 acres
   industrial .....0 acres

   (b) Open Space/Woodlands/
   Recreation .....0 acres

   (c) Wetlands/Riparian
   Areas.....0 acres

   (d) Floodplain..... 0 acres

   (e) Productive:
   irrigated cropland..... 0 acres
   dry cropland..... 0 acres
   forestry ..... 0 acres
   rangeland ..... 0 acres
   other.....2.5 miles of stream

8. Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.

9. Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project Including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action: Pending completion of a successful disease screening and authorization from FWP Fish Health committee, we will move no more than 100 westslope cutthroat trout from Good Creek to Robertson Creek, above the natural barrier near FS Road 60. This will serve to establish a genetically pure population of westslope cutthroat trout that will be safeguarded from invasion by brook and rainbow due to the natural barrier near FS Road 60. This will provide approximately 2.5 miles of cutthroat habitat, previously unavailable to any fish. In the event of a catastrophic failure the first year, the procedure may be repeated once.

10. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits:

Agency Name	Permit	Date Filed/#

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
USFS - Land Management	

11. List of Agencies Consulted During Preparation of the EA:

USFS – Sensitive Plants
FWP – Sensitive Wildlife

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A. Evaluation of the Impacts of the Proposed Action Including Secondary and Cumulative Impacts on the Physical and Human Environment:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACTS				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2. AIR **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACTS				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality?		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture or temperature patterns, or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (continued)

. WATER ill the proposed action result in:	IMPACTS				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of urface water quality including but not limited to emperature, dissolved oxygen, turbidity or pathogens?		X				
. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount f surface runoff?		X				
. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or ther flows?		X				
. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water ody or creation of a new water body?		X				
. Exposure of people or property to water related azards such as flooding?		X				
. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
. Increase in the risk of contamination of surface or roundwater?		X				
. Violation of the Montana Non Degradation Statute?		X				
. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
. Effects on other water users as a result of any lteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in urface or groundwater quantity?		X				
. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (continued)

4. VEGETATION **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACT				Can Impacts Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered plant species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X			5b & d
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of non-game species?			X			5c
d. Introduction of new species into an area?				X		5b & d
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Fish/Wildlife Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

5b & d – Cutthroat trout will be allowed to colonize a section of stream that was previously unavailable to fish by virtue of a natural waterfall, which prevented upstream movement. This will provide a controlled expansion of cutthroat trout, within their existing range, and there will be no danger of future compromise by brook trout and rainbow trout encroachment because of the natural barrier.

5c – The only anticipated change in nongame species will be in abundance of stream-borne insects, as they will likely provide the major food source for the fish, an otherwise naturally occurring process. The insect community of Robertson Creek was sampled and identified to a reasonable degree of taxanomic resolution. *Hydropsychids* represented nearly 40% of the sample. *Peltoperlids* and *Chloroperlids*, combined, represented nearly 40% of the sample, and the remaining 20% was comprised of *Baetidae* and *Chironomidae*.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Noise/Electrical Effects (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: __						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Inde:
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. Other: __						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other: __						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Impact (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT9

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
e. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)		X				
d. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT (continued)

2. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES ill the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of rehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
. Physical change that would affect unique cultural or historic values?		X				
. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

3. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE ill the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A roject or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources hich create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely azardous if they were to occur?		X				
. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or ederal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant nvironmental impacts will be proposed?				X	X	13d
. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts hat would be created?						13e
. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Summary Evaluation of Significance (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

13d – This project is part of a cutthroat conservation and restoration plan proposed for the Good and Shepard creek drainages. Future projects are expected to incorporate the use of piscicides to remove exotic brook and rainbow trout in an effort to restore the native cutthroat element to the proposed streams. This action is being proposed because of its simplicity of providing an isolated population of genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout, which displays resident life history characteristics. This project and the proposed future cutthroat projects are mutually exclusive in kind (technique), and the success of one will have no bearing on the uccess of another in terms of establishing a precedence.

13e – This particular project is not expected to be controversial at all. However, the project (as mentioned above), in its entirety, may be controversial because of the anticipated use of piscicides in OTHER streams.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (Continued)

1. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

   The only alternative for this project is no action, in which case, Robertson Creek would remain fishless.

2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency: N/A

3. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? YES / NO If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

   No EIS is required. Because of the simplicity of this project and the anticipated public acceptance, it is believed that an EA is an appropriate level of analysis.

4. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

   This project has been presented to the Flathead Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited and to a few local private landowners.

5. Duration of comment period if any:

   September 18 through October 2, 2000

6. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

   Grant Grisak, Fisheries Biologist
   MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
   490 N Meridian Road
   Kalispell, MT 59901
   (406) 751-4541

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

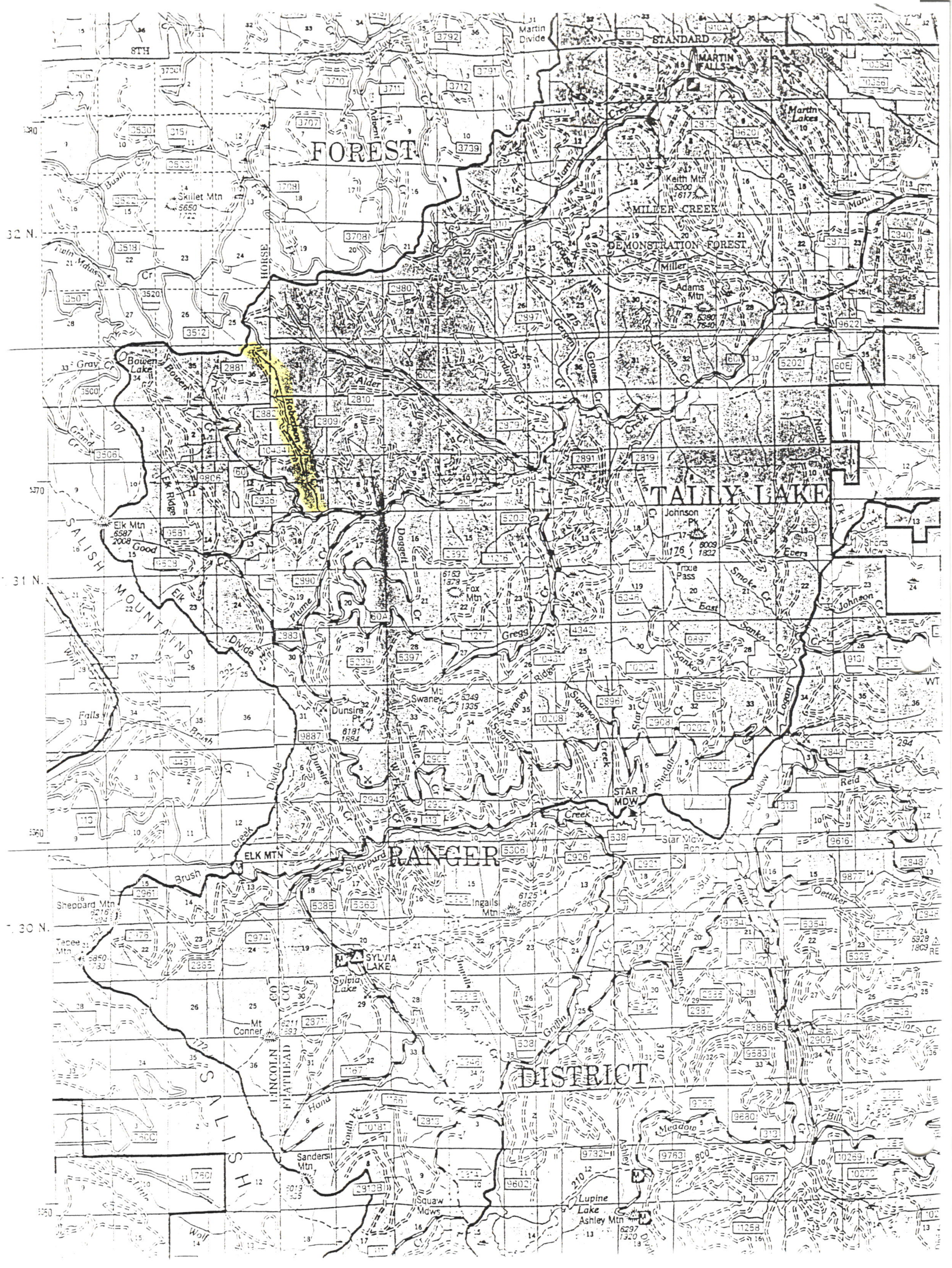
Martin and Griffin creeks are neighboring streams that have natural waterfall barriers on them. They also have genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout populations above and mixed populations downstream, dominated by brook trout. These streams serve as templates for the potential of Robertson Creek to provide a stronghold cutthroat population safe from invasion by exotic trout. Due to its simplicity, compared to other restoration techniques, stocking fishless streams is a preferred and successfully proven technique of conserving other cutthroat trout species (Behnke & Zarn, 1976 and Young, et al., 1996). It is believed that this project will be fundamental in the cutthroat trout conservation/restoration program proposed for Good and Shepard Creeks.

Behnke, R. and M Zarn. 1976. Biology and management of threatened and endangered western trouts. U.S.D.A. Forest Service, technical report RM-28, Denver.

Young, M., Schmal, R., Konley, T. and V. Leonard. 1996. Conservation status of Colorado River cutthroat trout. U.S.D.A. Forest Service, general technical report RM-GTR-282.

PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

It is believed that this project will benefit the public by providing a cutthroat trout population, protected by a natural barrier, that may be useful in future management programs by providing a source for genetically pure eggs and sperm from fish displaying resident life-history type behavioral characteristics.


FOREST
MILLER CREEK
DEMONSTRATION FOREST
TALLY LAKE
RANGER
DISTRICT
SALISH MOUNTAINS
SALISH
STANDARD
MARTIN FALLS
ELK MTN
STAR MDW
SYLVIA LAKE
Martin Divide
Keith Mtn
Adams Mtn
Johnson Pk
Elk Mtn
Fox Mtn
Dunsire Pt
Mt Swaney
Ingalls Mtn
Sheppard Mtn
Tepee Mtn
Mt Conner
Sanders Mtn
Squaw Mdws
Lupine Lake
Ashley Mtn
Bowen Lake
Trixie Pass
Star Mdw Rch
LINCOLN CO
FLATHEAD CO